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WALT WHITMAN

THE PROPHET-POET

WALT WHITMAN

THE PROPHET-POET

BY
ROLAND D. SAWYER

BOSTON
THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY
1918

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TO

CLARENCE DARROW

A FELLOW-TRAVELLER
ALONG WALT'S OPEN-ROAD

PREFACE

In that world in which I live and move and have my being, the chief source of formation, growth, influence and impression, has been my reading. There are many books and writings to which I am eternally indebted; works on history, literature, economics, theology, philosophy, which, at different periods of my life, I have taken up and studied, and they became milestones along my mental journey. But there are also books and writings of quite another character; works that we read not as sources of information or from which to frame our philosophy of life, but works that are inspirational and are to be read again and again. Such works are books of biography and autobiography, religious writings, and poetry. In this realm "The Gospel of Jesus," and "Leaves of Grass," are books that have out-distanced all others in their influence upon me, and are books which I want ever within reach.

In the early weeks of the year of 1907 my eyes were very bad; evenings I could read but little; sometimes it was a few pages, sometimes only a few lines, then I must close the book and brood, ponder, think over what I had read. For such form of reading the poets surpassed all others, and I soon found that Whitman surpassed the other poets; that from him I received the strongest stirrings of my emotions and thoughts.

Thereupon I turned to study this man Whitman; I had access to a fine private collection of Whitman matter, as well as the public libraries, and for several weeks I saturated myself with Whitman; what he had written, what had been written about him. That was six years ago, but Whitman does not lose his grip on me — he lasts, he wears — he touches life and feeling at so many places that I believe he will last and wear.

Much has been written about Whitman, and it has been well done; but it has ofttimes been in a too technical vein (as Symonds), or in such a form as would appeal only to enthusiasts (as

Traubel), or in too expensive form (as Binns). Accordingly I have felt the need of a short, up-to-date, popular presentation of the poet, and his aims and philosophy: to fill that need I have written the following pages under the title of Walt Whitman, The Prophet Poet.

ROLAND D. SAWYER.

August, 1913
Ample Manse,
Off-the-beaten-path-a-bit.
Ware, Mass.

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WALT WHITMAN
THE PROPHET-POET

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAN

"The good, gray poet gone:
brave hopeful Walt,
He may not have been a singer
without fault,
Yet there rang
True music through his rhapsodies,
As he sang,
Of brotherhood, freedom, love and hope.
He shall find hearers, who in a slack time,
Of puny bards and pessimistic rhyme,
Dared to bid men adventure and rejoice:
His "yawp barbaric," was a human voice;
The singer was a *man*."

London Punch.

NO more baffling figure ever entered the realm of literature than Walt Whitman. When he first issued his modest edition of one

thousand copies of " Leaves of Grass " in 1855, he was greeted on the one hand by Ralph Waldo Emerson, then in the height of his Concord career, with a letter glowing in praise: in which Emerson said among other things, " I greet you at the beginning of a great career."

On the other hand, the conventional literary reviews greeted him with prompt and savage abuse. Said the Boston Intelligencer, " 'Leaves of Grass,' is the work of some escaped lunatic." The Criterion said, " The author of this book must be possessed by the soul of a donkey who died of disappointed love." The London Critic said, "The author of this book ought to be publicly whipped." There were a few reviewers who treated Walt with forbearance, Edward Everett Hale for instance; and there was a still larger number of reviewers, who joined with readers of serious literature, and treated Walt with contemptuous silence. But Walt Whitman was not a figure to be treated with indifference and thus disposed of, as he says —

"I have arrived,
Bearded, sun-burnt, gray necked, forbidding,
To be wrestled with as I pass
For the solid prizes of the universe."

And surely he was to be reckoned with; smug conventionalism might perhaps have silenced the individual Walt Whitman, but Whitman was more than an individual, he was the voice of a coming new humanity, the expression of coming changes in human life that were not to be checked.

If a touch with his personality is needed to understand the literary work of any man, it is surely so with Whitman. Dowden says, "Vital personal contact with Whitman is essential to a true knowledge of him." Triggs put it even stronger and declares that "personal absorbtion is the price of understanding him." It is easily seen to be true that we must first look at Walt himself in order to understand and appreciate his work, when we pause to think of the purpose of "Leaves of Grass," which was to show us a new kind of a man, the modern man. Burroughs said in an essay in the Critic (March 19,

1898), "In Emerson we see life through the Transcendental spirit, in Carlyle through the heroic spirit, in Hugo through the Romantic, in Arnold through the classic, but in Whitman through the democratic."

This is indeed a splendid and accurate classification; and it is essential to understand the man, to see him as Thoreau saw him, the greatest democrat of his day — then we can understand his place and message. Careful study of primary sources, ("Leaves of Grass"), and of secondary sources, (his biographers), will soon bring us in sight of the man described so well by O'Conner — "Large, calm, superbly formed: clad in the careless and rough and picturesque costume of the common people — resembling the stevedore, mechanic, seaman or laborer, passing leisurely along the pavement, such is Walt Whitman."

This was the man, who by some sort of intuition or cosmic consciousness, seems to have been first to feel the modern spirit, and to have struck up its songs for the world. A writer and

poet, who as Burroughs says, "provokes inquiry and will repay it."

Whitman was born of good English stock which he could trace as far back as 1560. They were a race of solid, tall, strong framed, long lived, moderately moving, friendly people. Walt took these characteristics from them, and was a full six foot tall and in his best days weighed 212 pounds. He was born in 1819 at West Hill, Long Island, the second in a family of six sons and two daughters; his boyhood was divided between Long Island and Brooklyn; he attended the common school till he was 13 and was then sent to learn the printer's trade. From 17 to 20 he spent his time teaching school, writing some for the papers, and occasionally working at his printing trade. Around the age of 20 he published and edited a small sheet on Long Island for a year and a half; for several years after, or till 1846, Walt worked at his trade in New York, occasionally writing something for the newspapers, attending the various meetings and places that would attract

a serious minded mechanic. In 1846 Whitman was appointed editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, and held the position two years, when he left it to take charge of a paper in New Orleans. In this Southern city romance seems for the first time to have visited his life. Love came between himself and a Southern woman, apparently of higher social rank which caused her family to look upon any thought of marriage with disfavor.

Love grew to intimate relations however, and the woman became the mother of a child. Whitman very suddenly gave up his position and returned North, and was ever after strangely reticent about the whole affair; he tore mention of it from his books, and seldom referred to it unless to speak of it as the tragedy of his life. There seems to have been an agreeable understanding between him and the woman, for he seems to have visited her again, and it is not sure but that she later bore him other children; and one of the grandchildren is said to have visited him in the North.

Shortly after Whitman returned home his

father died, and a mixture of leisure, newspaper work, carpenter work, and a good deal of quiet observation, reading and thinking occupied Walt for the next five years, or till 1855. Then came the putting out of his "Leaves of Grass," in an edition of 1,000 copies, most of the typographic work, as well as the writing, being done by himself. Whitman's life passed along till 1862, with some writing and work at his calling.

When the war broke out, Whitman, true to the Quaker traditions in which he was brought up, subscribed too strongly to Garrison's ideas to enlist. But a brother George enlisted, and when he was wounded in the Burnside campaign in Dec. 1862, Walt at once started for the hospital camps. When Walt got there he found George was well and out, but the hospitals were full of sick and wounded soldier boys who needed him quite as much as George ever did, and in the hospital camps he stayed, ministering to the wounded, until the war closed. The heroism and the love of Walt in those next two and a half years has no parallel in the war history; it is said he ministered to 100,000

men. Such devotion and sacrifice should have silenced the carping cries of the outraged prudes who were ever criticising him.

Walt had no means of getting a living, and there was no pay in his hospital work, so his friends secured for him a government position as a clerk: here he worked mornings, and visited the hospitals afternoons. Walt kept up this life to the close of the war. He also kept up his writing, and his war pieces and later work did not prove quite so much a shock to the sensitive nerves of the conventional people as had his "Song of Walt Whitman," and a growing circle of friends, and a growing fame became his. In 1873, Walt who had been just ten years in Washington, suffered his breakdown in health, a shock, from which he never fully recovered. He was taken to his brother's home in Camden, N. J., and had not been long there before the mother for whom he felt such a great love died, and for the next three years, we find Walt, sad, sick and lonely, living with his brother. By 1876 he had in a measure recovered his health, and the next few years were

of considerable activity. He continued to live with his brother till 1884, when he bought his little home in Camden, where he passed the sunset years of his life, receiving the homage of an increasing circle of admirers, till his life went out in 1892.

CHAPTER TWO

HIS MESSAGE — DEMOCRACY

"I speak the pass-word primeval. I give the sign of Democracy."

IN an analysis of Whitman's message to the world, there is a very general agreement upon its essential elements. Symonds and Burroughs are the standard interpreters of the poet, and a glance at the following table will show how thoroughly they agree in their analysis of Walt's message; they consider the poet under these divisions —

SYMONDS	BURROUGHS
Religion	Religion
Self-Hood	Self-Reliance
Sex Element	Sex and Morals
Comradeship	
Democracy	Democracy
The artist and poet	The artist and his art
Pioneer	Pioneer
	Poet of Science
Personality	Personality

Ingersoll in his short but excellent study of Whitman, follows exactly the same classification and division, and makes only one addition, namely, to consider "Whitman the Philosopher." Clarke is shorter, and speaks of the poet's message under the heads of "Religion, Democracy, Art and Personality." Whitman's biographers make the same analysis: Binn, the best of them, has a chapter on "The Mystic," which is different from any treatment by the above mentioned writers. Havelock Ellis calls Whitman "The Poet of the New Spirit," and considers his work under the heads, "Artist, Pioneer, Democrat, Personality"; Dowden treats him as "The Poet of Democracy," without definite analysis, and so does Triggs. It is evident that whatever faults Walt may have had, he did not fail to make his message clear; there is no division in his followers about understanding him. Burroughs' reference to Whitman's relation to modern science is good, but it is Burroughs rather than Whitman who sees it, and it was not a conscious, integral part of Whitman's teaching. And again Ingersoll's refer-

ence to Whitman as " A Philosopher," is hardly well taken. It is true that Walt had the soul to see things, but it was to see them as the poet or seer, rather than the philosopher: to see them with the feeling rather than the reason.

He took in everything, and turned it over and over in his mind, but it was to brood over it rather than reason about it. Poets come to their knowledge by intuition rather than through the processes of reasoning, and Walt instead of being an exception to the rule, was one of its clearest examples. With these omitted, the concensus of the opinion of Whitman's students is, that to understand his message, one needs to discuss and understand,

His Personality
His Literary art and aims
His treatment of Sex
His Religion
His position as a Pioneer and Prophet
His Democracy, Comradeship, Self-hood, etc.

I would agree that these are the essential things to understand to know Walt's message

for us; but I would add two more chapters, which I think are necessary that we should see, and these are, "His Note of Joy" and "His Love of Nature." I also would dissent from that classification that puts Democracy as one element of Walt's message, alongside the others.

I do not so understand it, Whitman was the poet of Democracy, and his democracy does not stand alongside of the other elements, but it embraces all. There is no fault with Symonds' and Burroughs' dissection of the message, but they do not quite state the relation of democracy in it to the other elements: democracy is the mother of all Walt's ideas, not a sister to any of them.

WHITMAN'S DEMOCRACY

Thus it comes that we consider Walt's Democracy, not as one of the salient points in his message, but as the message itself. It is the warp and woof that contains all else. Whitman's Democracy was that revolutionary democracy that has been trying to express itself in stronger tones ever since it first made itself

heard at all, "in the one happy event in history," the French Revolution. Democracy in Whitman's message, is liberty, equality and fraternity.

a — His liberty is the liberty of the individual, the *whole* individual. There was no excuse in his mind for anything that infringes on the liberty of the individual. This leads him to those parts of his message spoken of as his individuality, egoism, self-hood, religion, sex views, joy in life. Liberty for the *whole* man, his body, every part of it. He resents all power, restraint, canons, governments that hamper the freest development and expression of the individual. In all his writings, he has, as foremost in view, this healthy, free personality.

"One's self I sing, a simple, separate person."

"I will effuse egotism, and show it underlying all,
I will be the bard of personality."

He insists that everything is for the individual; all poems, doctrines, art, religion,

civilizations. He even growls at his beloved "States," that they are giving up "modesty, honesty, generosity," and have become "keyed up by money ideals, money politics, money religion, money men" (Camden, page 42), and he does this on the ground that they are neglecting to develop the individual. And he was right, he wanted to level up, but he saw money-madness was leveling down. Because of his zeal for liberty, Walt was ready to leave the "Beaten Path" and travel "The Open Road"—

"Henceforth I ask not good fortune — I am good fortune . . .
Strong and content I travel the open road.

"I am one of those who look carelessly into the faces of Presidents and governors as to say — who are you?"

b — But Walt's egoism is as Burroughs says, "an altru-egoism": he wants nothing for himself that he does not want others to have on equal terms. He is for equality; equality of all men and both sexes. This led him to

further radical sex views, to his humanity feelings; and he becomes so intensely human and sympathetic. His conception of democracy is that of an absolute equality. Everything in the universe is good if it has a show. The creation is sound, evil is just a part of good. He believes God made everything, hence it is all good. He speaks the word "en-masse," and gives the sign of democracy. He crys out for equality, of all men, of the sexes. His woman is the strong comrade, and the mother of men: not the weak toy and sweetheart. All men are equal, the wise and the lacking: the good and the evil: the rich and the poor. Whitman is the bard of them all, of the successful and the failures as well; he puts his arms about the outcast and the prostitute: he is as embracing as the sun in the skies. Even the hardships of the long-drawn and painful civilization do not phase Walt, and he would agree with Carpenter ("Cause and Cure of Civilization"), that it all is a sort of prolonged and necessary disease that will eventually lead to a fuller and better life. Like Tolstoy,

Whitman had entered the life of the working people: not the slums, not the poor degenerate, but the *working class.*

And he found among them the healthiest elements of our human life, the open-hearted, free men and women; the honest workers living in friendship; caring little for formalities, social distinctions and conventions. These were the people who in Walt's thought were the salt of the earth, and all of us who have touched the different classes agree with Walt. And so he glories in the common-people, in the sun-tan, in the brawn, in the common; exalts the uncouth and decries the cultured and effeminate. He goes forth to "toss the new roughness and gladness among men." "Open your scarfed chin, while I blow grit within you," he challenges. His message is for the "divine average," his passion is to level all up to the plane of the common man and women, to make all like them "superb persons."

c — Under the thought of "comradeship," Walt emphasizes the fraternity side of democracy. His comradeship is not merely the

delightful emotions between friends, but a social, yes — and political bond. Walt has all the faith in men that Jesus ever had, he says —

" Come, I will make the continent indissoluble;
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades."

And again he puts over against all human institutions, states, churches, property and all, that one great institution of " the dear love of comrades ":

" The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades."

He looks forward in his message of democracy to the better day, to that new city of friends, when church and state, and all hampering institutions and custom shall be dissolved, and the Love of Comrades be the only bond in society. That may seem to some to-day, to be a very insecure bond, but to Walt's far-seeing vision, our present bonds of life are more insecure. He saw that social life could not

cohere by means of lawyers, agreements on paper or force of arms.

Walt's comradeship is then not something different from his democracy, it is rather the realization in human life of his democracy; when we reach that free relationship we have it, till then all this talk about having it is mere chatter. To the short-sighted Walt may appear only destructive, but to those who see farther in, he is ever constructive, he wants to throw away the shell, the states, churches, emperors, armies, and have in their place the ship of democracy. And Walt saw that everything was working for this, and that when the ship is launched there will be stored in it, not only all the present but all the past. To make a table of analysis of the poet's message, I would draw it thus —

	DEMOCRACY	
LIBERTY	EQUALITY	FRATERNITY
Self-Hood	Humanism	Comradeship
Sex Values	Sex-equality	
Religion		
Joys in life		

That Walt was no mere preacher, but was sincerely in earnest in this message is abundantly testified to by his hospital work in the army, and such incidents as his assisting the sin-trampled youth to escape the Boston police and escape into Canada.

CHAPTER THREE

HIS RELIGION

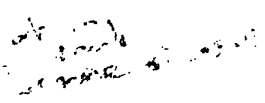
"I hear and behold God in every object,
yet understanding God not in the least.
In the faces of men and women I see God,
and in my own face in the glass;
I find letters from God dropped in the streets
and every one signed by God's name."

WALT Whitman was a profoundly religious man, though his religion was so broad and advanced, that he had little sympathy with the organized institutions of religion. The only religious order that he had at any time anything like sympathetic feelings for, were the Hicksite Quakers; their influence on his life and views was considerable. Walt belived in God, immortality, religion; but not in Christ, the Bible or the church, at least according to the generally accepted Christian views. Whitman's God, was the immanent God of the

most radical new theology, whom he felt 40 years before these theologians deduced him. Goethe sang—

"God dwells within and moves within the world and molds,
Himself and Nature in one form enfolds,—"

and with this agrees the view of Whitman, which "sees God in every object." This God of Walt's is not one who reveals himself, or to whom we may pray in a Christian sense, but he is the Eternal Good-Will, which back there in the Universe, is the Cause of all things, and on whom the race may in confidence rely. And this confidence, or reliance on this God, this state of mental rest which sees and feels Divinity in everything, was what Walt meant by his religion, and he ranked it very high. He says, "the real and permanent grandeur of these states must be their religion." And again, "There can be no character or life without religion." He also teaches that we may rely upon this Good-Will for personal life beyond the grave, for immortality; as he expresses it,



" I laugh at what you call dissolution."

Toward Jesus Walt had a very tender feeling, and a reverence for him as a great Teacher: the poem, " To Him Who Was Crucified," shows this. Walt speaks in one place of " Walking the hills of Judea with the beautiful gentle God by my side." In another place he calls Jesus " The Lord Christ," but these expressions were not in the sense of ordinary accepted Christian faith. As for the Bible, and forms of worship and churches, he says, " We consider Bibles and religion divine, that is, they grow out of us." Here he means to say that they are divine as we are divine, as everything is divine, but not in any other sense. Walt saw no special revelation, in fact to him it was not needed, *all is revelation.* For this religion, this sort of a natural, pantheistic theism, Walt was ever urgent in his demands, and he declares —

" No man was ever half devout enough —
None have ever yet adored or worshiped half enough,
None has ever begun to see how divine, he himself is."

And again, we hear him say, "I know I am deathless." "A mouse is enough to stagger sextillions of infidels." "I do not despise you priests, my faith is the greatest of faiths." Whitman's religion was then very near that of the advanced liberal of to-day, a sort of naturalistic theism. But with the liberal denominations Walt found little more sympathy than with the orthodox; the Quakers and their inner light came nearest to his ideas. And Whitman held his conceptions to the end. The attitude of mind he reveals in his heart-to-heart talks with Traubel during the closing years, is the attitude of his whole life. These talks at Camden show to the last Walt's strong belief in God, in immortality, in the worth of religion. It is true Whitman is listed as a free-thinker, and that he manifests a deep detest of preachers and churches, but the basis of all this was his religion, not his lack of it. And his attitude toward Jesus in these last days, is the same as that of earlier days, he sees in Jesus the great soul, the prophet-comrade, nothing more. To quote from some of Walt's talks at Camden, he

says (page 97) speaking of Cable, "he is the thinnest man, the most uninteresting, I ever met — he is a typical Sunday School Superintendent with all that signifies." And what it signifies to Walt, he shows us when he says, "The last person in the world from whom I should expect any inspiration would be the average Sunday School teacher — the typical good man of the churches, the money bags of the parish." Probably there would not be to-day so strong a tendency to criticise Walt for such utterances as there was when he made them. Walt's criticisms of the church were indeed very searching, he says in one place, "The negative virtues of the church are to me very abhorrent; the morals of the church would be morals if they were not something else."

At another place he remarks, about as Tolstoy later remarked, "That he had often tried to discover how Jesus and the churches got so divorced, how the institution came to destroy the spirit." Walt took as a concrete case John Wanamaker, who refused to allow the "Leaves" to be sold in his store. "The whole

ideal of the church is low, loathsome, horrible, a sort of moral degradation, out of touch with the struggles of contemporary humanity," bitterly complains Walt.

When the question was put to him, if he thought the churches could safely be destroyed, he replied, "Yes, why not: I see no use for the church if it lags behind the age." He says, "The distinctly preacher ages are gone — the world is done with sermonizing — I am not sorry."

Walt was tremendously interested in his friend Ingersoll, and gloried in Ingersoll's whacks at the church, and his triumphs over his antagonists, especially his triumph over Gladstone.

Yet Walt distinctly denies any bitterness toward the church; he says in one of his Camden talks, "People thought I was powerful set against the church, but the church never bothered me, and I have never bothered the church — it is a clean-cut bargain between us." "I have nothing at all with the letter of the church, but that part of the church which is not

jailed in church buildings is all mine as well as anybody's." Walt's feeling about Jesus is reiterated in these last days, when he declares to Corning and Clifford, the Unitarian ministers who visit him, that he holds the crucifixion of Jesus to have been but one of many tragedies, and that the life of Jesus was just another life, "told big to be sure, but just another life." When Walt heard for the first time Ingersoll's eulogy on the "Leaves of Grass," he gratefully acknowledged the tribute, but pointed out that Ingersoll had stopped short of the plain matter, "and that 'Leaves of Grass' was crammed full of immortality, bound together by the idea of a resident purpose in humanity and the universe." Again he declares, "People say the 'Leaves' want in religion, but I think it is the most religious of books — it is crammed full of faith — faith is its one substance, without it, it would be an empty vessel." These statements show that Walt never changed his attitude on religion, that at 70 he held to the same faith as at 35. And that his religion was worth something to him, is seen by the support it gives him

in the burden of his sickness. It shines out in those trying sick years of '74 and '75, like the faith of St. Francis. See his recorded moods in "The Song of the Universal," "The Prayer of Columbus," or "The Song of the Red Wood Tree." Hear him cry out,

> "All, all for immortality:
> Love, like the light, silently wrapping all."

Speaking to God of his faith he says —

> "Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in time and space,
> Health, peaces, salvation universal."

Few men have felt more secure of personal immortality than Walt Whitman. He says, "I believe in immortality; and by that I mean *identity*. I have arrived at this result more by feeling than by formal reason, but I believe it, yes I *know* it."

And lest he be misunderstood he declares again a few days later, "When I say immortality — I mean identity, the survival of the personal soul, your survival, my survival. If there is not immortality then the universe is a fraud. I

agree with Epictetus, that what is good enough for the universe is good enough for me; the universe is immortal and so am I." Whitman would agree with Thoreau in saying, "one world at a time," but he would go on to maintain that the very expression involved another world, as indeed it does.

I close this reference to Whitman's religion by referring the reader to his "Prayer of Columbus." Let those classical critics who say Walt could not write poetry, and those ecclesiastical critics who say Walt had no religion, tell us what to do with it, if it be not a genuine poetic expression of deep religious faith.

Old, paralyzed, battered, worn and poor, just on the margin of the Ocean of Death, Walt here pours out the secrets of his soul, "under a thin historical disguise," as Binn well calls it.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATURE LOVER

" Doubtless there comes a time, and perhaps it has come to me, when one feels through his whole being, and pronouncedly the emotional part, the identity between himself and Nature, which Schelling and Fichte are so fond of pressing. How it is I know not, but I often realize a presence here, in clear moods I am certain of it, and neither chemistry nor æsthetics will give the least explanation."

" The Oaks and I," Specimen Days.

WALT Whitman's place among the pre-eminent Nature-Lovers of the world can be disputed by no one. His feeling for Nature was far beyond that of the average man. Dr. Bucke says, " Walt's favorite occupation was to stroll about out of doors, sauntering away by himself, looking at the grass, flowers, trees, vistas of light, changing aspects of the sky, listening to the birds, the insects, tree-frogs,

and all the hundreds of natural sounds. It was evident that these things gave him a pleasure far beyond what they give ordinary people. Until I knew him I did not dream that these things could give one the absolute happiness they gave him." Bucke's testimony is truthful and well deserved, for one has but to study Walt's life to see him the Nature-Lover. As a lad we find him lying on the sand, gazing into the sea, spellbound by its awe and mysticism. We see him the robust man, seeing and feeling Nature's great heart. And the convalescent down in the lane at Timber-Creek finds healing and happiness in the caressing air and sunshine, and he feels the all embracing love. The old man drives his horse into the ocean and sits an hour enjoying the sunset and gets the cold that brings on death. Whitman has left us abundant testimony of what he felt and saw in Nature; I can here take space to pick up but a few of these things —

"Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade,
What is that you express in your eyes?

It seems to me more than all the print I ever read."

Or again, his feeling of " The Night "—

" I am one that walks with the tender and growing night,
I call to the earth and sea, half-held by the night.
Press close, bare-bosomed night — Press close magnetic nourishing night;
Night of the south winds, night of the large few stars:
Still nodding night, mad, naked, summer night."

He listens to the Katy-Did and records his feeling by saying, " The Katy-Did, how shall I describe its piquant utterance — every night it soothes me to sleep." And the only tone of pathos that comes from him in the old crippled years, is that wrung from his lips by the thought that he must give up something of this out-doors, this direct touch with Nature. He cries out to us, " I am an open-air man: I am an open-water man. I want to get out, fly, swim, I am eager for my feet again. But my feet are eternally gone."

But Whitman was not only the supreme feeler of Nature, he was also the creator of a literary style particularly adapted to the ex-

pression of the great emotions that Nature makes her appreciative children feel. When Bryant wanted to express these emotions, he found as Blake had found, that the rhyme and rhythm of ordinary verse were all insufficient, and he took recourse to the stately lines of blank verse. But Walt went a step farther and created a style of his own, a literary form of expression that is distinctly the out-doors style.

Ed. Carpenter, who is Whitman's foremost disciple, says he has to go out of doors to write in Whitman style, that if he attempt to write inside his thoughts insist on rhyming, but the minute he goes outside Whitman verse is the result. "Whitman verse and the great serene, untempered facts of the Earth go together," declares Carpenter.

Crosby speaking on this point says, "The trim balance of a Christmas tree with colored candles and gilt balls and stars is beautiful in a way, but it is the want of symmetry that helps make the oak and the pine, kings of the forest. And even blank verse with all its grandeur is too suggestive of landscape gardening, or the

studied roughness of rock gardens." The conclusion is that Whitmanic verse is the natural form of out-door expression. I can but here add my personal word, that for me, there is no form of expression so adequate to reveal the feelings we get in the soul when out under the trees, as this style of Whitman's.

Walt's rapture of Nature reaches the point of a religion and has been often pointed out. The note sounded by Goethe, that "God and Nature in one form enfolds," was certainly ably seconded by him who declared he saw, heard and felt "God in every object."

Whitman tells us his book is to be read "Among the cooling influences of external Nature." And he goes on to define what he means by Nature, "not the smooth walks, trimmed hedges, butterflies, posies and nightingales of the English poets, but the whole orb, with its geologic history, the Kosmos carrying fire and snow, that rolls through the illimitable areas, light as a feather though carrying millions of tons."

Nature to him is the whole big world carry-

ing everything with it. In his preface to the Leaves he tells us of the effect on one's conduct, of this love of the Earth, and it is the best summing up of his feeling that we have and I quote it in closing this consideration; he says —

"This is what you shall do, love the earth, and sun, and animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone who asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your labor and income to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men; go freely with the powerful uneducated people, and with the young, and with the mothers of families; read these Leaves (Leaves of Grass) in the open air every season of the year. Re-examine what you have been taught in the schools, or in the church, or in books, and reject whatever insults your own soul."

CHAPTER FIVE

HIS NOTE OF JOY

"I dote on myself — there is that lot of me,
and all so luscious;
Each moment, and whatever happens, thrills me with joy."

I KNOW of no place where we get such an interpretation of the joyousness of just living, as we do in the poems of Whitman. Burroughs speaking of Whitman's life describes it as being, "free, unhampered, unworldly, unconventional, picturesque, simple, untouched by the craze of money getting, a joyfully contented life." "Whitman's life," continues Burroughs, "was a saunter through the years, too busy in enjoying life to be disturbed by anything." But let us hear Whitman for himself, he says—

"I am enamored of growing out-doors;
Of men that live among cattle,
or taste of the ocean or woods;

Of the builders and steerers of ships,
and the wielders of axes and mauls,
and the drivers of horses;
I can eat and sleep with them,
week in and week out."

Now here we certainly have the picture, not of the effete and pampered, such has become so good an example of aristocratic success, and in emulation of which, half the world has worn itself pale and discontented, but we have the robust, healthy man. Such a man as any of us may be, and being so, may find life worth living. Walt shows us that the truest joy does not come from the attainment of those things which we do not care for, but which an abnormal society says we must have. Walt says to us that the true joy of life comes in the living out of our true selves. Developing those loves, longings and desires that are especially ours. As he puts it for us in one of his verses —

"When I heard at the close of day how my name had
been received with plaudits in the capitol,
still it was not a happy night that followed.

And else when I caroused, or when my plans were
accomplished, still I was not happy;
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of
perfect health, refreshed, singing, inhaling the ripe
breath of autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and
disappear in the morning light,
When I wandered alone over the beach, undressed,
bathed, laughed with the cool waters, saw the
sunrise,
And thought of my dear friends on their way coming,
Then I was happy."

Here we have it, there is nothing necessary to be happy, but to just live: live, freed from conventions and false pursuits, just live naturally and be possessed by the joys that are all about us.

Perhaps many of us have tried at some foolish period in our life, to enter into the spirit of snobbish society (I have, may God forgive me), to stand about in a stiff collar and starched shirt and black coat and white vest. To daintily sip from a cup of cocoa or punch, to nibble from some little bit — was there any joy in doing this? Do we not see, that being

down at the beach, lolling in the sand, barefooted, collarless and coatless, watching the crested waves come in and recede, to be filled with the music of their roar: to open the lunch and ply ourselves vigorously to the pie and hunk of cheese, do we not see that as Walt shows us, here comes joy. To go into the barn of any thrifty farmer, fill our nostrils of the cattle, horses and hay, stroke their sleek sides, look into their eyes, feel their fellowship, their life, does not this spell for us sweetness and joy? Anything that is natural contains joy. Live in our own way, shun conventional make-shifts, and joy awaits us, says Whitman. Let us look at Walt as he presents himself in the 1860 edition of his poems,—

" His shape arises
Arrogant, masculine, naïve, rowdyish,
Laugher, weeper, worker, idler, citizen, countryman,
Saunterer of woods, stander upon hills,
    summer swimmer in rivers or seas —
Countenance sunburnt, bearded, unrefined,
Reminder of animals, meeter of savage and gentlemen
    on equal terms,

Passer of the right hand around the shoulder
of his friends,
Enterer every where, welcomed every where,
easily understood by all"—

Such was this man, this democrat, with a message that we can all hear and carry out. The man freed from conventions, living his life in his own way, and finding it as his biographer says, "one long joyful lot." It is his philosophy of life which is preëminently fitted to lead one to realize the joy in just living. "Leaves of Grass," is the text-book of the joy of life, and the one who studies it long enough to get its message, will come to accept its gospel, to quote again —

"To breathe the air, how delicious:
To speak, to walk, to seize something by the hand:
O the amazement of things:
O the spirituality of things —
I praise with electric voice,
For I do not see one imperfection in the universe,
I do not see one cause or result lamentable at last."

Elbert Hubbard sums up with a stroke of genius, the whole story, when he says, "Milton

told us all about heaven, Dante told us all about hell, but it remained for Walt Whitman to tell us about the earth."

Binns is another who notes this "Note of joy" in Walt, he says, "The pages of 'Leaves of Grass' portray the happy man. Byron may dominate the whole of Europe for a generation by the dark, Satanic splendor of his pride: Carlyle may hold us by his fierce, lean passion for sincerity: but Whitman draws us by the outshining of his joy."

And so Walt does tell us of the earth, of the joys, the common joys of life, accessible to most all of us. Walt tells of the good things we may have *now*. While other poets are ever looking back and grieving for the return of childhood's happy days, or looking ahead to see that "man never is, but always is to be blest," Walt sings of the beauties and glories of the present life. He rebukes our groans and sighs, he bids us look out and see the wonders of creation, he shows us we ought never to outgrow the child's delight at the wonders of life, he lifts us up, he gives us courage, manly pride,

self-reliance, and the strong faith that comes to us when we feel real kinship with the Heart of the Universe. To sum it up Walt infuses into his disciple the "Joy of Living." And this note in Walt's life never deserted him.

He even treated of death, his own death, in a similar vein. He thinks of it as a soothing, beautiful voyage, he describes it as that exulting moment when the vessel leaves the shore —

> "Joy, shipmate, joy!
> Pleased to my soul at death I cry:
> Our life is closed — our life begins:
> The long, long anchorage we leave;
> The ship is clear, at last she leaps —
> She swiftly courses from the shore:
> Joy, shipmate; Joy!"

He welcomes it by saying —"Come, lovely, soothing and delicate Death." He figures it as a dark "mother gliding with soft footsteps," to relieve.

Such is the "Note of Joy" in Whitman's message. The snatches of quotation I have

made have been suggestive rather than exhaustive.

I have not touched his long poem entitled, "Poem of Joys," where he starts out he tells us, "to make the most jubilant poem," and where he speaks of the joy of his spirit "uncaged, darting like lightning," and in which he goes on to treat of the exultant moments in the common toils of men. His work is full of this "Note of Joy." I have simply purposed to draw attention to the fact, and to show that no treatment of Walt is complete that does not take note of it.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POET PIONEER

"I will lock horns for a moment with the question of art. With hardly an exception the poets of the day devote themselves mainly, sometimes altogether, to fine rhyme, spicy verbalism, the fabric and cut of the garment, jewelry and style. I have not bothered much about style, form, art — never allowed them to impede me nor assume mastery over me."

"Good-By My Fancy."

WHITMAN was a pioneer among poetic writers in two things, his form of expression and his use of sex images. His position was so unique, and came upon us so abruptly, that we are not yet over discussing it, and any treatment of the poet must consider it. True, Carpenter in his recent excellent study dismisses the question as one, "futile because wholly rhetorical," but this dismission will hardly suffice.

First let us take up Walt's form of expression.

Is it poetry, or only prose in disguise, as his enemies declare. The answer we will give will probably depend upon our theory of what art really is. If we regard the true artist as the one who mixes colors or disposes words, then we will hardly put Walt in the class with those workers, like Tennyson for instance, who take a very slender line of thought and work it over and over for 40 years till it becomes well nigh technically perfect. But if we regard as the artist, the man who reproduces in you the emotions that he felt when he saw with eagle eye, and sang or painted, then we must rate Walt as far above such as Tennyson as the moon is above the stars. The popular objection to Walt's abandonment of the common meter and rhyme, is not so formidable as it appears, upon reflection a bit. When we pause to think a bit we begin to see with Shelley, that the rule established in literature that writers of prose must seek new forms while writers of poetry may not, is a bad rule. We begin to feel that we should hail a pioneer. And Whitman is that poet-pioneer, as Stedman says, "'Leaves of

Grass' in thought and method is avowedly a protest against a hackneyed breed of singers, singing the same old songs." And we have a higher authority that Stedman, we have the poet himself, in his own summing up of himself in a review, he says — "An American bard at last — one of the roughs, large, proud, affectionate, eating, drinking and breeding — his costume manly and free, his face sun-burnt and bearded. For intellectual people who follow their reading, dress and eating by London or Paris — who keep in out of doors, never touch the earth bare-foot, he does not sing. No tea-drinking poet is Walt Whitman, but a rude child of the people."

However much some may criticise Walt's taste, or lack of it, in writing this view about himself, it must stand as the authoritative summing-up of what he meant by his work, and how he most desired it should be regarded. I know of no statement that has ever been made, that I believe would have pleased Walt so much, as that of Prof. Carpenter, when he says of Walt, "For the first time in our modern centuries a

poet had been born of the people who was not a renegade." We must also recall that other writers, notably Shelley and Emerson, had lamented the narrow confines of poetic form, and even experimented along the line of new development. They did not succeed, Whitman did. Whitman tried the classical forms and found them insufficient, that they were not adapted to him nor he to them, so he boldly threw them out, with a courage native to himself, and originated the irregular lines better adapted to his self-expression. His own defense was set forth in his manifesto preface to the first edition and the words that sum up his idea, are "simplicity and originality of expression." Walt's lines are not, however, utterly abandoned, they are indeed carefully chosen; and he tells us he searched for proper words and forms as much as the most careful stylist. He once told Burroughs he had been searching for 25 years for a word to express what the twilight song of the robins meant to him. The wonderful amount of expression contained in the titles of his pieces shows to us that his words

were not stumbled on, but carefully and powerfully selected. The same care is shown in the length of his lines, and they come to make for us neither prose nor poem, but a sort of free and yet measured chant. They do not lend themselves readily to popularity, they are hardly quotable like rhymed things. Tennyson once declared for rhyme because it assisted the memory, but Ingersoll well points out, that with the use of the printing press, the old idea of a poet being also a rhymester is no longer necessary. Ingersoll even went further and declared rhyme was a hindrance, because it compelled the poet to wander from his subject and interfered with his dramatic action, which, as poetry is the sudden, short bursting into blossom of a great thought, must destroy poetry. Walt's lines then can never go into the school-room and displace Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." And there is a certain stateliness in the lines of "In Memoriam" which we miss in Walt's chants. But there is a strength, a ruggedness, an outdoor and elemental somewhat in Walt's chants that makes them true poems, and one of the

grand forms of literary expression. We do not look for Whitman's forms to displace the ordinary forms, but we look for them to rise, if they have not already done so, to a recognized position as a needed and essential form of literary expression; that has an equal worth with any other, and that has a strength and freedom that can never be attained in rhyme and meter. Whitman then was a poet, even though, as he says, he did not make poetry with reference to parts.

To those who want sweet songs of domestic sentiments, of course others like Longfellow will be preferred; but to those who are strong enough to receive it, Walt's poetry will come as a gospel, and a gospel of beauty, even though in a new and strange form.

The second great objection to Whitman as a poet is because of the sexual character of many of his images. Now we must begin by understanding the place of sex in Walt's scheme of things — he is going to speak of all, and to show that all is good. Inklings of the Hegelian philosophy have come through to Walt, he finds

everything has a place in the world purposes. Now it is manifest that Walt cannot carry out this idea, and omit so big a part of human life and experience as sex. This would cause a sad break in his scheme. His philosophy is not true, if sex has no place. And if sex has a legitimate place, then it is clean and honorable. Then again I believe Walt's treatment of sex is healthy and sane. It is true his sex is, as Symonds points out, not that of the boudoir, the alcove, neither is it the sex of the brothel. It is the clean healthy relation between the male and female. Walt is as much against vice as against prudishness, he would have us recognize that,

"If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted;
And in man or woman, a clean, strong, firm-fibered body is beautiful as the most beautiful face."

Walt's scheme then made treatment of sex necessary, he is to voice a protest against that dishonor which asceticism has placed upon the human body. And his demand for freedom in

literature makes it imperative that he be free to speak of sex. He declares it his purpose when he says,

" I will show of the male and the female that either is
but the equal of the other;
And sexual organs and acts, I am determined to tell
you with courageous voice, and to prove you
illustrious."

I do not see how we can criticise " Children of Adam "; " if these passages cause society to blush," as the English writer says, " so much the worse for society." We need to get away from prudishness. We need to remember, as Heine once remarked to the protesting matron, " Madam we are all naked under our clothes." Walt never felt that he erred in his treatment of sex, even though it aroused so much stir; in one of his Camden talks, he says, " All this fear of indecency, all this noise about purity and sex is nasty — too nasty to make compromise with."

His abhorrence of vice was strong, he tells us —

" Have you seen the fool who corrupted his own live
body?

Or the fool who corrupted her own live body?
They can not conceal themselves.

In treating sex, Whitman was simply true — for sex and its passions are one of the great facts of the universe, and we can not longer pay any attention to the Anthony Comstocks. If these over-sensitive and over-conservative people had their way, we should never have had the Reformation, the Renaissance or the French Revolution: we should never have had Voltaire, the French Encyclopædia, Shelley or Byron.

But there is another item to be called up, did Walt sometimes go too far? Frankly I think he did. He could have carried out his philosophy and at the same time payed a little more respect to the commonly accepted feelings of society. Granting that Walt was writing for the divine average and not the so-called refined, yet it must be confessed he is sometimes pretty bold. His images are as Symonds says "audacious." Take this one for instance —

"The hairy wild bee that murmurs and hankers up and down —

That grips the full-grown lady flower, curves upon her
with amorous legs, takes his will of her, and
holds her to himself tremulous and tight till
satisfied."

or again,

"I turn the bride-groom out of bed, and stay with the
bride myself;
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips."

Such passages, and there were still others in his first edition, that were later removed, these make us feel that Walt did not have quite enough respect for the taste of society. And in view of the great abuses of the sexual life which humanity has made, most of us will think it were a little better not to have been so bold.

But summing all up, Walt Whitman was a poet, and none the less a poet because a pioneer. His work is poetry, though it throws off the rhyme and meter: and it is clean poetry, though it uses sex images.

He may have overdone both, as it is plain he did. He is ofttimes too audacious with his sex, he ofttimes drifts into the uncouth and cat-

aloguing (Emerson told him this, and Emerson was wise) yet his chants are great poems. "Leaves of Grass" indeed "strike up the song for the new world." His work is a great production, and to appreciate it, one needs, as Burroughs says, to come to see that it is more than mere literary product, that it is the expression of a new gospel.

Walt's work had a value quite apart from literary quality, but we will not minimize that quality. A work that could grip so fastidious a person as Stevenson, could for him, as he says, "Turn the world upside down, blow him into space a thousand cobwebs of illusion," must have some merit. And Walt was a poet because he had the poet's soul. He was the true mystic with eyes to see farther than the slow-going plodding mortals. As a lad we see him lying on the sand and looking into the sea, and feeling its awe and mysticism. In the robust man traveling over the city or up and down the states, he sees more than cars and teams, houses and roads, he sees the spirit in everything.

A convalescent we find him roaming the lanes, and sitting beneath the willows of Timber Creek; sitting for hours and days caressed by the air and sunshine, and feeling all the embracing love of the Universe.

The old man driving his horse into the sea-edge and sitting an hour enraptured of the sunset, getting the cold that brings his death, here we have the mystic, the poet. The observer who can see in

"Oxen that rattle the chain,
or halt in the leafy shade:
What do you express in your eyes,
It seems to me more than all the print of the world."

The man who can see these things is a poet. He has the soul of a poet, and his productions bear the stamp of true poetry, and other poets can not disown him, even if he uses different forms from theirs.

"Surely whosoever speaks to me in the right voice,
him or her I will follow,
As the water follows the moon, silently with fluid
steps anywhere round the globe."

If this be not a poet's expression of the response of one person to the appeal of another personality, then I am at loss to know what a poetic expression is. As Emerson said, "Whitman had the terrible eyes to see back into the soul of everything," and I am sure that he had also the poet's genius to tell the world what he saw.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HIS PLACE AMONG THE PROPHETS

I here announce myself a follower of Walt Whitman.
I have caught his vision of myself;
I have caught his vision of humanity;
I have caught his vision of the Universe.
I see life as he saw it, sincere, sane and hearty,
To be lived simply, free from imaginary lines,
Above conflicting creeds, warring systems and petty standards.

Walt leads me to the heights, I look down on all sides,
My soul becomes strong, strong enough for the Open Road,
Henceforth I know no classes, sinners nor saints,
I fellowship with all, I enjoy it all, the world is good,
And I follow down the long brown path with Walt Whitman my leader.

R. D. S.

IT will be a long time before Walt Whitman can be accepted by all. He shares the fate of the strong personalities, of the prophets, of

creating a division. To have the good-will of every one, we need to say nothing, do nothing, be nothing. But as with Jesus, strong souls become a rising to some, a falling to some. The sane view of those who reject Walt is best expressed by John Jay Chapman in his essay on Emerson. Chapman shows us how Walt looks to the thoroughly conventional eye, from such a standpoint the estimate is just. Chapman says, "Walt Whitman is a type of those who after a sincere attempt to take a place in organized society, revolt from its drudgery." Chapman continues, "I have often wondered how life appears to the tramp, the wandering worker, Walt tells me. He is the type of the man who has tasted the joy of being in the open, of being disreputable and unashamed, he has reached an experience where life has for him no terrors, and upon him society has no hold." This estimate is just from the standpoint of conventional society.

The question remains to be decided however, whether society is right or whether Walt was right. We can only say for the present, that

each year an increasing number of souls come to feel like Walt, and hence come to regard him as a prophet. As Clarence Darrow says for us, "When man has grown simpler and saner and truer, when the fever of civilization has been subdued and the pestilence cured; when man shall no longer deny and revile the universal mother who gave him birth, then Walt Whitman's day will come. In the clear light of that regenerated time, when the world looks back on the doubt and mist and confusion of to-day, Walt Whitman will stand forth, the greatest, truest, noblest prophet of the age, a man untainted by artificial life and unmoved by the false standards of his time." Whitman has sometimes by enthusiastic followers been likened to Plato, but this is far from the point, he is rather to be likened to Isaiah and the other rugged Old Testament Prophets. Or he might be likened as Bucke says, to one of our primitive Aryan ancestors who suddenly comes back to life.

Walt was not a philosopher, not a scholar, of organized knowledge, of systematic learning

he knew little. Says Carpenter, "Of that vast structure of classified information that we call scholarship, Whitman had no conception, he handled books clumsily and was not a bookman."

This is a true estimate, one who looks into Walt's writings, his Journals, prose writings, "Camden Talks," etc., expecting to find any cut and dried philosophy will be sadly disappointed. Walt had no carefully wrought out philosophy, he was a seer, a poet, a prophet, pure and simple. And Walt was a prophet — First, as a poet — He was the logical successor of Burns, Blake and Shelley in poetry, and his conception of life belongs with such men as Rousseau, Voltaire, Paine, Mazzini, Emerson, Tolstoy, Thoreau.

The new self-consciousness, social enthusiasm and perception of Nature, with the new interpretation of religion, which were the great ideas that actuated these men, Walt felt and pushed along.

Walt was a prophet of a new school of poetry, of literature. He stands a John the Baptist

crying for a literature that shall be wider, social, democratic in scope. He tells the world it can not longer be content with a poetry, however beautiful its technique, unless it be in touch with the modern intellectual movements and the pulsing heart of man.

Of course Walt had to feel this way for he was, secondly a pioneer democrat, a prophet of the new democracy. Thoreau meeting him goes away saying, "he is our greatest democrat." And Carpenter sums him up so well when he says, "Whitman was the genuine democrat; with titanic optimism he believed that the hope of humanity lay in these uneducated, illiterate hordes. Here dwelt the inexhaustible energy, here he saw the great vital forces of humanity."

And thirdly, Whitman was prophet of a new kind of knowledge. His knowledge came to him as a certain illumination, an intuition, rather than from reasoning processes. And he tells us that the final test of truth shall be whether we *feel* it so. By which he means that the final appeal is not to the intellect, but to the sense, the

emotions, the whole of us. Matters fundamental are not to be settled by speculative argument in the realm of pure intellect, but we intuitively detect truth, rather than reason it out. Reason at the best can only seek to analyze what we already know, and ditto science. So the great interpreters are not those who register facts of science, but those who touch our sense. Whitman stood for the validity of the intuition part of us. And was he not wise? The "cool, clear logic," of a Calvin or an Edwards can send us all to hell. It can justify capital punishment, but when Tolstoy hears the dull thud of the victim's head as it drops from the guillotine to the basket, he does not stop for "logic" or "reasoning," he *knows* this thing is wrong. As Penn had said of the Indians, "they can believe in God and immortality without the aid of metaphysics," so Walt would declare of us to-day.

But Walt was supreme as a prophet, in being the prophet of a man, the best kind of a man, the new man, the modern man, the fruit of the age, the man of the coming society. "Com-

rade," he cries, "this is no book, who touches this touches a man." We are no blind hero worshipers, we know that Walt had his weaknesses. He had a certain egotism, which he frankly admitted, glorified in, all of which will ever seem a little coarse. His use of Emerson's letter, his writing press notices about himself, his arising at the close of Ingersoll's eulogy to receive the applause, his preparation of his own tomb to become a sort of Mecca for the faithful, all of this has the element of the "poseur."

Again there was a certain arrogance and narrowness in his make-up, he often needlessly quarreled with good friends like Doyle and O'Connor, he did not always seem to appreciate their deeds in his behalf, he had a lack of frankness in many matters. He did not grasp the economic features of democracy though so radical a champion of it, nor did he always appreciate the efforts of those working for it at great sacrifice, as for instance when he praised the German Emperor. His poetry is ofttimes tiresome and needlessly burdened. But after all,

what man is there of whom we can not say as many things in criticism of him.

John Burroughs, perhaps the sanest, ablest student of Walt, who knew Walt, had his friendship, speaks of Walt the man, in this manner; says Burroughs, " In his home Walt was gentle and patient and conciliatory. He was a pre-eminently manly man, richly endowed with healthy human qualities, and built in a large mold every way. He had a fresh, strong, sympathetic nature. The atmosphere of Walt Whitman was that of a large, tolerant, tender, sympathetic, restful man." Dr. Johnson of England, stated after a visit to Whitman, " He impresses me with a sense of strength, intellectual power and winning sweetness." Joel Chandler Harris said of Walt when he died, " He was a man broad and deep, and men must have broad and deep sympathies to possess the password to Walt Whitman." Bucke says of him, " No man ever liked so many things and disliked so few as Whitman, all sights and sounds pleased him. He never argued or disputed, he never spoke about money. He never

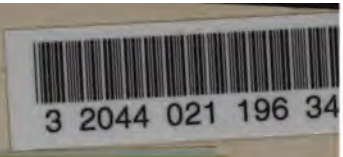
complained or grumbled about the weather, pain, illness or any thing else. He never swore, and apparently was never angry or afraid."

These qualities in Walt have led some of his enthusiastic disciples to regard him as a great restorer of a natural religion, and they have placed him by the side of the Founder of Christianity. Prof. James, looking at him from the scientific standpoint says, "He is the supreme example of the inability to feel any evil, and in many respects he is in the genuine lineage of the prophets." We must conclude then, that after all has been said, all criticisms made, that Walt Whitman was a large-souled, great-hearted loving man of exceptional power, and possessing a large measure of what we speak of as genius. He loves all, he feels for all; he refuses to send the boys away from his sick room on the noisy Fourth of July lest their sport be spoiled, he puts his sheltering arm about the weak, the unprotected, the outcasts.

Walt Whitman has left us I believe, the example of a fine spirit, a spirit that for containing the graces of the Great Galilean has been

equaled by only three other historic characters, St. Francis, Burns and Tolstoy.

He was a man, a man to follow, and the outpourings of his soul as found in "Leaves of Grass," will furnish to those who come to them for stimulus, impulse and emotion, a larger view of life and a more robust taste. To those who come to Walt Whitman's poems for pretty technique or cut and dried philosophy, there is bound to be disappointment, but to those who come to them for suggestion for thought and emotion, for a touch with a large soul, with a prophet, I am sure satisfaction awaits.



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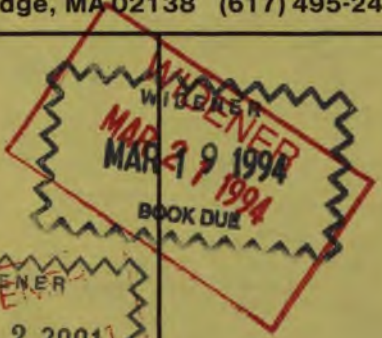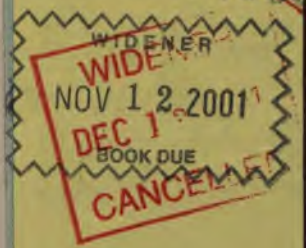
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